

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1881

C O N F I D E N T I A L YAOUNDE 1998

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, ACOM, SHUM, CM

SUBJ: FAREWELL CALL ON PRESIDENT AHIDJO

REF: (A) STATE 99551 (B) STATE 102863 (C) STATE 98034

1. SUMMARY. DURING MY FAREWELL CALL, PRESIDENT AHIDJO AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, INCLUDING ZAIRE, APPRECIATION FOR INCREASING US AID TO CAMEROON, AND SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER STUDY OF US WATTS REQUEST HAD BEEN COMPLETED. AMBASSADOR MADE DEMARCHES ON MONDALE-VORSTER TALKS AND SECRETARY'S HUMAN RIGHTS SPEECH. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENT AHIDJO, WHO RETURNED TO CAMEROON FROM FRENCH VACATION TWO DAYS AGO, RECEIVED ME FOR FIFTY-MINUTE FAREWELL CALL. AFTER USUAL REGRETS AND COURTESIES, HE REITERATED HIS WORRIES ABOUT RUSSIAN ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA, REFERRING BACK TO HIS ORIGINAL CONCERN ABOUT US SENATE CUTOFF OF AID TO ANTI-MPLA MOVEMENTS IN ANGOLA. HE ALSO ACCUSED IAN SMITH OF PLAYING THE RUSSIANS' GAME. HE URGED THE US NOT TO BE INDIFFERENT TO AFRICAN PROBLEMS, SINCE THEY HAD SIGNIFICANCE FAR BEYOND THE CONTINENT.

3. I USED LAST STATEMENT TO EXPLAIN PLANNED VIENNA TALKS
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(REF A) TO HIM. HE HAD HEARD ABOUT IT ON VOA AND ASSURED ME THAT HE HAD NOT MEANT TO ACCUSE US OF INDIFFERENCE. (FYI: HE HAD ALSO HEARD ON VOA THAT AMBASSADOR-DESIGNATE SMYTHE HAD BEEN CONFIRMED BY SENATE, WHICH WAS NEWS TO ME. END FYI) AHIDJO JUDGED ALSO FROM INCREASES IN US AID TO HIS COUNTRY THAT US IS FAR FROM INDIFFERENT. HE EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR REQUESTED AID FOR TRANSCAM III. I MENTIONED INFORMATION CONTAINED IN

REF B. HE POINTED AGAIN TO HIS UNSTABLE NEIGHBORS. WHEN I EXPRESSED ADMIRATION FOR HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE, AS DEMONSTRATED BY HIS MANEUVERS GOING ON ALL OVER COUNTRY, HE GRINNED AND SAID, "MAYBE THAT WASN'T PRUDENT."

4. ON WATTS REQUEST, HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT YET KNOW PROGRESS OF STUDY COMMISSIONED BY HIM, HAVING JUST RETURNED TO YAOUNDE. IF STATION WERE TO BE LOCATED IN YAOUNDE AS EVIDENT PART OF EMBASSY, HE WOULD HAVE FEWER DIFFICULTIES WITH IT THAN WITH LOCATION IN DOUALA. THE DIFFICULTIES WERE OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL, POLITICAL, AND PUBLIC OPINION NATURE. CAMEROONIANS WOULD QUESTION PURPOSE OF THIS AMERICAN INSTALLATION AND FOREIGN CRITICS OF CAMEROON WOULD ALSO EXPLOIT THE MATTER. I EXPLAINED THE PURPOSE OF THE FACILITY IN GREATER DETAIL THAN AHIDJO HAD EVER HEARD FROM ME, STRESSED THAT HE AND OTHER CAMEROONIAN OFFICIALS WOULD BE INVITED TO VISIT THE STATION AND THAT IT WOULD EMPLOY CAMEROONIAN WORKERS, INCLUDING SKILLED TECHNICIANS. I ALSO TOLD HIM THAT THE US WOULD BE AS HELPFUL AS WE COULD IN HELPING GURC IN EXPLAINING NATURE OF FACILITY. HE CONCLUDED THIS PART OF CONVERSATION IN A FRIENDLY BUT NON-COMMITAL WAY, SAYING THAT HE WOULD TRY TO ARRIVE AT DECISION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

5. LIKE FONMINISTER DEUTCHA LAST WEEK, AHIDJO EXPRESSED SOME CONCERN ABOUT AMBASSADOR YOUNG'S STATEMENT ON AMERICANS' PARANOIA ABOUT "A FEW OR EVEN A FEW THOUSAND COMMUNISTS IN AFRICA." I PUT THIS INTO CONTEXT FOR HIM, BUT AM NOT SURE THAT HE WAS ENTIRELY CONVINCED THAT HE IS PARANOID; OR, AS HAS BEEN SAID, EVEN PARANOIDS HAVE REAL ENEMIES, AND CAMEROON FACES CUBANS IN THE CONGO AND IN EQUATORIAL GUINEA.
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6. LIKE PRIME MINISTER BIYA DURING MY CALL ON HIM, AHIDJO STRESSED TASK OF NATION-BUILDING, WHICH HE SAID FACED ALL AFRICAN GOVERNMENTS WITH THEIR VAST TIRBAL, RELIGIOUS AND OTHER DIVERSITIES, WHICH ARE PARTICULARLY MARKED IN CAMEROON. AGAIN HE REVERTED TO RUSSIANS' EXPLOITATION OF THESE PROBLEMS.

7. HE WELCOMED MY COMPLIANCE WITH REF C.

8. PRESIDENT AHIDJO WAS RELAXED AND SEEMED IN GOOD HEALTH. DURING LUNCHEON HE AND MADAME AHIDJO GAVE IN OUR HONOR, ATTENDED ALSO BY SECRETARY GENERAL EBOUA, FONMIN KEUTCHA, MINISTER OF STATE FOR POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS EGBE TABI, AND MINISTER IN PRESIDENCY YADJI ABDOULAYE, DCM, PAO, RDO, AND PCD AND SPOUSES, AHIDJO ATE WELL AND PROPOSED SUITABLE TOAST, TO WHICH I RESPONDED RECIPROCALLY. BOTH TOASTS WILL BE POUCHED.

9. SURPRISINGLY, DURING AFTER LUNCHEON COFFEE, PRESIDENT AHIDJO INVESTED ME GRAND OFFICER OF THE ORDER OF VALOR. I WILL

OF COURSE OBSERVE DEPARTMENTAL REGULATIONS CONCERNING SUCH DECORATIONS.

10. COMMENT: AHIDJO ECHOED CONCERNS OVER COMMUNIST ACTIVITIES VOICED BY HIS MINISTERS DURING OTHER FAREWELL CALLS, AS WELL AS STRONG PRO-AMERICAN SENTIMENTS. BOTH HAVE GROWN NOTICEABLY DURING PAST YEAR, ALONG WITH HIS ACCESSIBILITY. RELUCTANCE TO COME TO A DECISION ON WATTS NEED NOT PRESAGE ULTIMATELY NEGATIVE DECISION, AND MAY HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY RECENT KAGNEW PUBLICITY AS WELL AS LOCAL PUBLICATION OF AUSTRALIAN STORY THAT ALICE SPRINGS IS CIA INTERCEPT INSTALLATION. WE KNOW FROM EXPERIENCE THAT CAMEROON GOVERNMENT WORKS SLOWLY THROUGH ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS AND PROCEDURES. IN CASE THEY DO ARRIVE AT POSITIVE DECISION THEY WILL IMPLEMENT IT, REGARDLESS OF FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC CRITICISMS. WE DO STILL HAVE OPPORTUNITIES TO INFLUENCE THEM TOWARD POSITIVE DECISION, IF IT IS WORTH IT TO US, THROUGH CONTINUING RESPONSIVENESS TO THEIR REALISTIC
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AND MODEST REQUESTS AND PRIORITIES. I URGE WE CONTINUE TO BE RESPONSIVE. I ALSO SENSED THAT AHIDJO WOULD BE OPEN TO AN INVITATION TO VISIT PRESIDENT CARTER, THOUGH SUBJECT WAS NOT REPEAT NOT MENTIONED, AND REPEAT MY RECOMMENDATION THAT SUCH AN INVITATION BE ISSUED.
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